

+ Nurturing Knowledge in Early Childhood

Susan B. Neuman, New York University





Sub-theme

- Reclaiming Early Childhood: Finding our way in the new policy environment





About Early Childhood Education

- Early childhood has never been strictly about education or nurturance
- Instead, early childhood has always been in the policy arena
 - “you can’t do early education without thinking about policy”



The changing landscape--Pre-K

- Old views about pre-K
- New evidence
 - Pre-k matters (Weiland & Yoshikawa; Reynolds, et al...)



+ Preschool Matters



■ Harvard
bound.....



The costs of the changing policy environment

- Developmentally appropriate practice?
- The whole child?
- Play?
- Active learning?
- ABC's
- Screening assessments
- Cost/benefit analysis
- Doing school



+ Other costs....

- CBO's
- Family day care
- Lack of attention to infant/toddler care
- Parent involvement





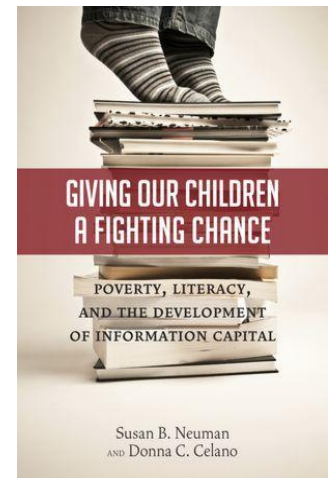
Reasons for this attention...

- Social justice perspective
- Political perspective
- Realization of failure of other policies



Accumulated	Exposure to words	Exposure to print
Middle-income	45- million words	2,435 words/per hour
Lower-income	15- million words	180 words/per hour

The challenge
and the
consequence.....





Reclaiming early childhood education...

- From developmentally appropriate ec instruction to developmentally effective ec instruction
- Nurturing cognitive, social, emotional, physical development



+ Nurturing knowledge...

10

■ Engaging Children's Minds





About knowledge....

- Unique features of learning
 - Children are eager to learn; want to develop an 'island of expertise'
 - Driven by meaningful activity (may look like play)
 - Less tolerant of nonsensical instruction
 - Learning is integrated, not domain specific



+ How do we build it?

- Direct experiences: see it, feel it, touch it, smell it
 - At a young age, children lack symbolic representation
 - Video studies





Rationale for play....

- Rather than, “Play is children’s work”
- Play is about:
 - Developing language, articulation, social pragmatics
 - Developing representational thinking



Nurturing knowledge...

- Indirect experiences
 - Books are the most powerful sources of knowledge
 - However, how adults engage in book reading makes an enormous difference in children's development.



+ A knowledge-rich environment:

What might it look like?

- Depth over breadth
- Language-rich, filled with vocabulary words that children will need in their investigations
- Gradual release of control, moving from teacher-managed to child-focused
- Lots of opportunities to explore





Marine Mammals: Decorating the Classroom



Serena's Classroom – Decorated with an ocean bulletin board and ocean animals hanging from the ceiling





Marine Mammals: WOW Lesson





Marine Mammals: WOW Video



Serena's Class – Watching the
WOW content video clip about
whales



Marine Mammals: Picture Cards



Martha's Class – Using picture cards
for a small group lesson

+

Greater attention on conceptual learning



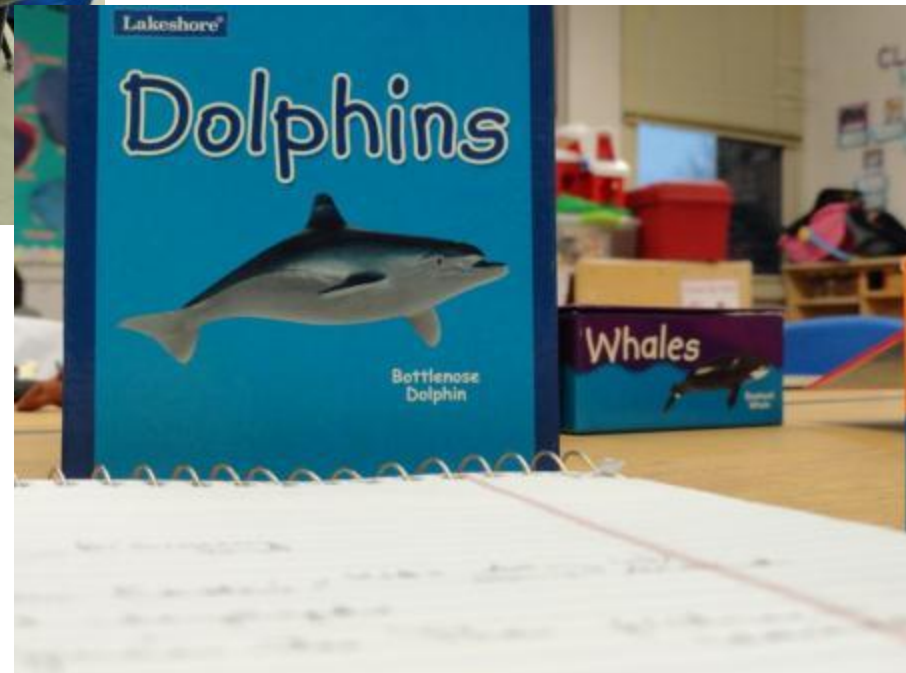
Pam's Class – Pocket chart with
WOW picture cards

+

Greater focus on content

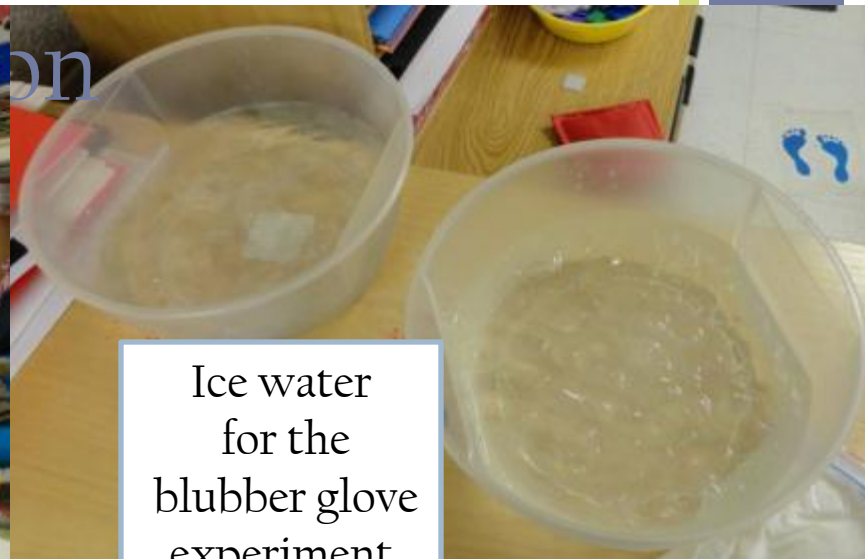


Pam's Class –
Marine Mammal Activities





Marine Mammals: Small Group



Martha's Class –
Learning about blubber





Marine Mammals: Small Group



Martha's Class –
Blubber Glove Experiment





Marine Mammals: Discovery Centers



Martha's Class – Marine Mammals have backbones; investigating bones



Serena's Class – Sorting, feeling, & learning about camouflage



Student-centered learning



Jen's student explaining what is and isn't a marine mammal.





Serena's Class – Sorting marine and non-marine animals



Marine Mammals: Discovery
Center

+

Academic Vocabulary



Molly's Class – Honey taste testing; insect puzzles



Marine Mammals: Discovery



Pam's Class – Sorting sea animals, exploring how marine mammals might look and feel, and learning about camouflage



Marine Mammals: Discovery Center



Pam's
Discovery Center Areas



Marine Mammals: Discovery



Jen's Class – Student enjoying a WOW book



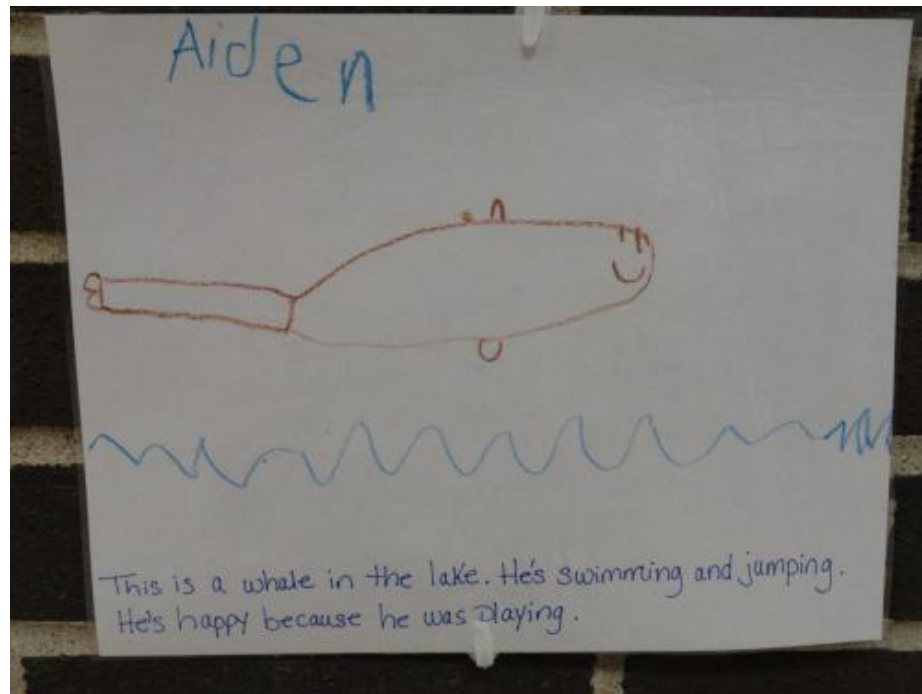
Marine Mammals: Arrival Work



Martha's Class –
Working in the
WOW Take-
Home Booklets



+ Writing for informational purposes



Molly's Classroom – Depiction of a whale drawn by a student and posted in the hallway for all to enjoy

+ New conceptions of child as learner

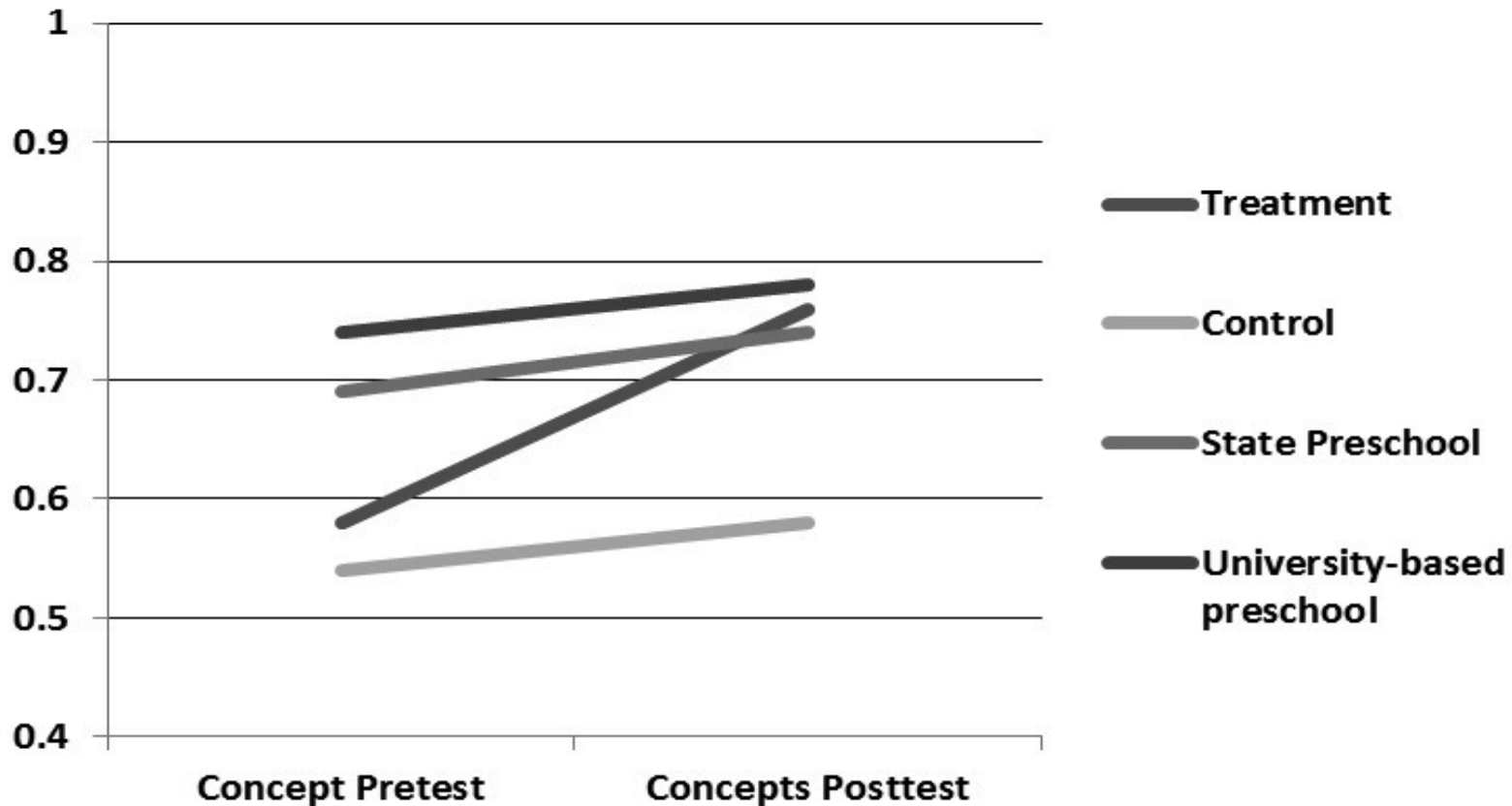


Jen's Classroom –
Science posters &
calendar with ladybug pattern



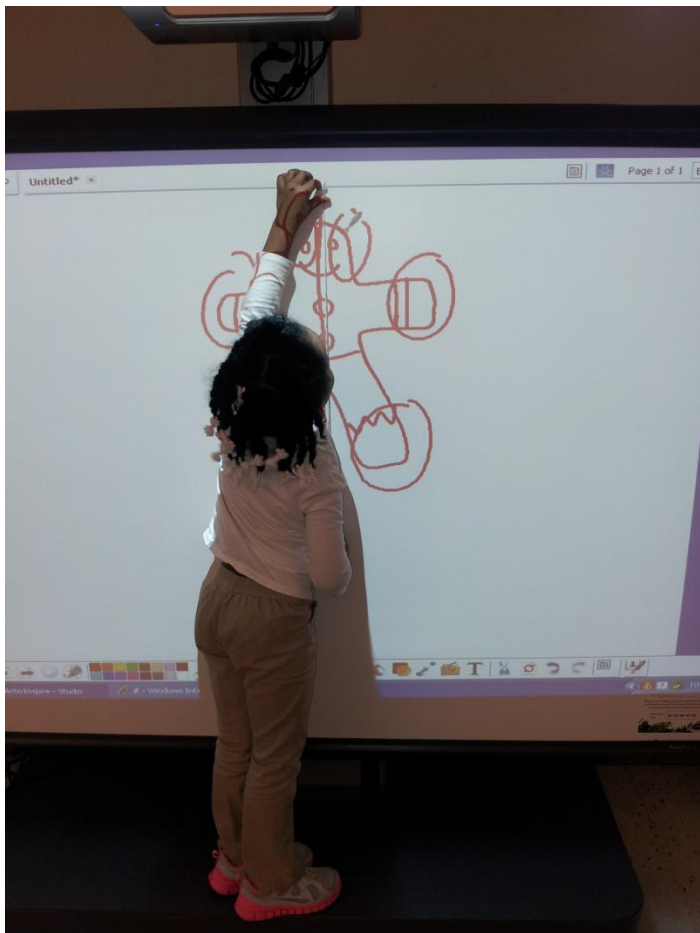


Evidence: The effects of a knowledge-rich environment



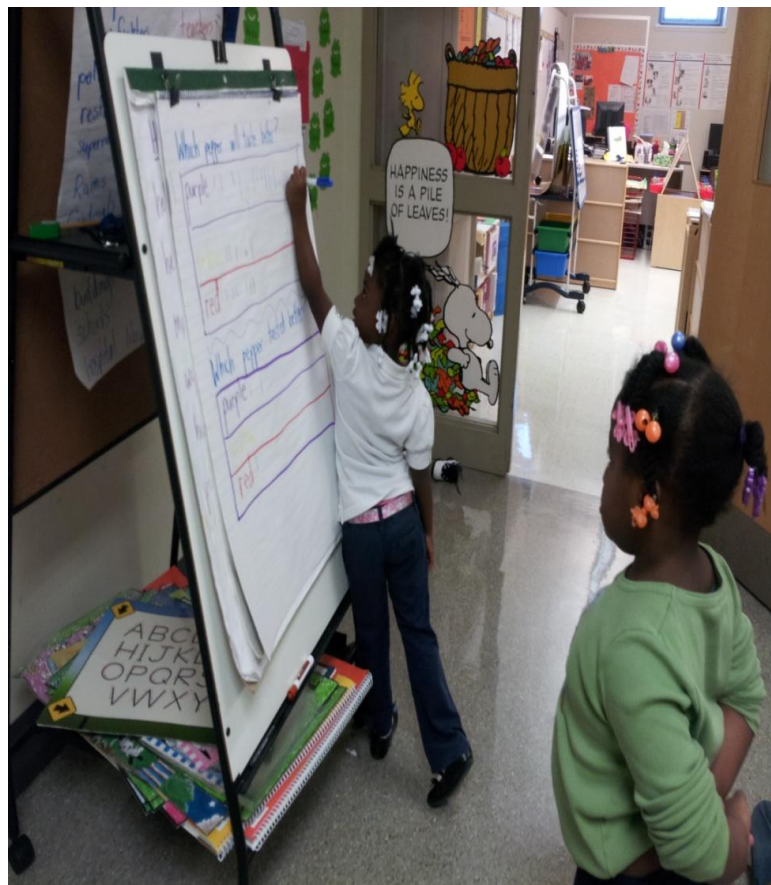


Investigation





Prediction



+ Imagination

37





Reclaiming early childhood...

- A better understanding of how young children development
- A better understanding of instruction which is developmentally effective
- A focus on nurturing knowledge in ways that support children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.





Thank You

